

**PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING A
STATE AND FEDERAL CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK**

1. Before initiating a criminal background check on an individual, read and become familiar with Article 23, "Criminal Record Checks of Direct Care Staff" (Enclosure 3). Once you have done that, proceed to step 2.

NOTE: These procedures are intended as a guide only. They do not exceed applicable state regulations/laws or federal regulations/laws relevant to employee eligibility. The procedures do not address or exempt facilities from federal regulations applicable to facilities that participate in the Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement program through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Further information related to federal regulations is located on the following Websites:

CMS Manual System <http://cms.hhs.gov/manuals/cmsindex.asp>

Code of Federal Regulations <http://www.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-retrieve.html#page1>

Questions related to federal regulations should be addressed to DHEC's Bureau of Certification by e-mail at STARNEAI@dhec.state.sc.us or by telephone at (803) 545-4205.

2. Direct Caregiver: anyone who is paid by or who has a written contract with the direct care entity to provide "hands-on" care to a resident, patient, or client as defined in Article 23, is considered to be a direct care giver and must have a criminal background check. Visitors, Volunteers and family members are usually not considered direct caregivers or caregivers under the definition of Article 23. However, if any volunteer, visitor or family member **habitually** provides or performs any services or care to a patient, resident, or client (other than a relative) as described in Article 23, Section 44-7-2910, Paragraph (B)(2)(c) of the definition of a direct caregiver, then he/she will be required to have a criminal background check. Minors are not considered to be direct caregivers. However, minors must be under the supervision of an adult who has had a criminal background check if the minor is providing "hands-on" care to a resident, patient or client (other than a relative).
3. As stated in the law, no nursing home, day care facility for adults, home health agency, or community residential care facility may employ or contract with a direct caregiver until the direct caregiver has undergone a criminal record check. The law does permit the direct care entity, on a temporary basis, to allow the employee or contract caregiver to work in the facility pending the results of the criminal record check. The law also states that the caregiver may consider the information revealed by a criminal background check as a factor in evaluating a direct caregiver's application to be employed or to contract with the entity. The decision to employ a direct caregiver based on the results of a criminal background check shall be determined by the direct care entity's policy and procedures with the following exceptions:

Exception 1: Community residential care facilities must comply with Regulation 61-84, Standards for Licensing Community Residential Care Facilities, Section 501.B. which states “Staff members/direct care volunteers of the facility shall not have a prior conviction or pled no contest (nolo contendere) for child or adult abuse, neglect, or mistreatment. The facility shall coordinate with applicable registries should licensed/certified individuals be considered as employees of the facility. For those staff members/volunteers who are licensed/certified, a copy shall be available for review.”

Exception 2: Home health agencies must comply with Regulation 61-77, Standards for Licensing Home Health Agencies, Section 1000, which states: “Direct care staff/volunteers shall not have prior conviction(s) of child or patient or elder abuse, neglect or mistreatment.”

Exception 3: For employees of community residential care facilities, day care facilities for adults, and for all four types of direct care entities that use volunteers, Health Licensing is not permitted by law (P.L. 92-544) to forward or disclose the results of the **federal background check**. We can only inform the direct care entity that the individual has or does not have a criminal conviction or has pled no contest (nolo contendere). The decision to employ a direct caregiver is left to the discretion of the direct care entity.

4. There are two types of criminal background checks.
 - a. A state criminal records check is the first check required and is mandatory in all cases. The SC State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) conducts this type of check. The hiring entity submits an application for the background check directly to SLED. SLED will return the results directly to the facility. Background checks can also be done by a private business, organization, or association that conducts background checks if that entity utilizes current criminal records obtained from SLED or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to determine any criminal record. State background checks must be initiated on employees hired after July 1, 2002 within 7 days. For employees hired prior to July 1, 2002, a state background check must be completed by June 30, 2003.
 - b. A federal criminal background check is the second type of check and is done through the use of fingerprint cards. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conducts this check on direct caregivers who have lived in South Carolina, Georgia, or North Carolina for less than 12 months and from all other states where they have lived, regardless of how long they have lived there. The hiring entity submits fingerprint cards to the Department of Finance, along with payment for the background check. Finance will process the payment and forward the cards to the Division of Health Licensing. Health Licensing will forward the cards to SLED. SLED will forward the cards to the FBI. The FBI will forward the results to Health Licensing. With the exception of volunteers, Health Licensing can only forward the results to nursing homes and home health agencies.

For employees of community residential care facilities, day care facilities for adults, and for all four types of direct care entities that use volunteers, Health Licensing is not permitted by law (P.L. 92-544) to forward or disclose the results of the federal background check. We can only inform the direct care entity that the individual has or does not have a criminal conviction or has pled no contest (nolo contendere).

- c. The current fee for a SC SLED background check is \$25.00 per regular screening for employees, \$18.00 per screening for volunteers, and \$8.00 per screening for charitable organizations.
- d. The current fee for an FBI background check is \$24.00 for employees and \$18.00 for volunteers. Depending upon your hiring policies and the legal limitations discussed in paragraph 3 above, a federal background check may not be necessary, if the results of the state background check prohibit the direct care entity from hiring the applicant.

5. **ASSESSING THE APPLICANT:**

- a. To determine if the applicant must have one or both types of background checks, he/she must first provide you with proof to verify that he/she has been a resident in SC for the past 12 months. The 12-month period is determined from the date of the employment application. For example, if the application is dated January 1, 2002, the applicant must have been a resident in SC no later than December 31, 2000. The applicant can provide verification of residency through:
 - 1. A driver's license or identification card issued by the State of SC;
 - 2. Rent, mortgage, or utility receipts in the applicant's name for a home within SC;
 - 3. Pay stubs in the applicant's name from a business located in SC; or
 - 4. Bank records in the applicant's name showing a deposit or checking account held in a SC office of a bank.
- b. If the applicant can prove SC residency within the past 12 months, then only a state criminal background check is required.
- c. If you are unable to verify that the applicant has been a resident in this state for the past 12-months, then both a state (South Carolina) and federal criminal background check will be required.
- d. **Exception 1:** The direct care entity is located in a SC county that has a common border with either North Carolina or Georgia and the applicant can verify that

he/she has been a resident in one of the two states within the 12 months preceding the date of the application. Proof of residency in either of the two states can be verified using the same criteria as indicated in paragraph 5.a. above. In this instance, only a state criminal background check in the applicant's resident state has to be conducted. The applicant must have been a resident for 12 months in only one of the two states. Combining the months of residency in both states to equal 12 months does not qualify for the exception.

- e. **Exception 2:** If the employee will work for a home health agency that is licensed to service at least one county that borders GA or NC, then the same rule in exception 1 above applies even if the employee will work in a county that does not border GA or NC. For example, a home health agency is licensed to service York County (which borders NC) and is also licensed to service Chester County (which does not border NC). The employee has lived in Charlotte, NC for more than 12 months and has been hired to work in Chester County. In this instance, only a state criminal background check from NC is required. The employee is authorized to work in any of the counties serviced by his/her home health agency without having another criminal background check initiated. Using this same example, if the home health agency services a nursing home, community residential care facility, or day care facility for adults, then the background check that was done by the home health agency will be sufficient for the employee to enter into these other types of facilities without the facilities having to initiate another background check for their records. For inspection purposes, our office will require the home health agency to provide the nursing home, community residential care facility or day care facility for adults with a letter stating that the employee has had a criminal background check. A copy of the letter is required to be kept on site at the facility.

6. REQUESTING A STATE CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK FROM NORTH CAROLINA OR GEORGIA:

- a. North Carolina and Georgia Criminal Background Checks – you can request a background check from either of these states by contacting the following:
1. NORTH CAROLINA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
PO BOX 29500
RALEIGH, NC 27626-0500
(919) 662-4500
 2. GEORGIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
PO BOX 370748
DECATUR, GA 30037-0748
(404) 244-2601

7. REQUESTING A STATE CRIMINAL BACK GROUND CHECK FROM SLED:

Using the Internet can decrease the length of time it takes to obtain state results. If you are unable to use this option, then results can be obtained over the counter from the SLED office or through the mail.

You must maintain a copy of the state results and make them available to Division of Health Licensing inspectors upon request. SLED will not provide extra copies of the results.

a. To obtain state results from SLED through the Internet:

1. If you want to establish a billing account with SLED for using their Website, you must complete the enclosed SLED-NET Application Form CJ-033 (Enclosure 7). You will also need to obtain a password. SLED recommends that you only establish a billing account if your volume will exceed 10 requests per month. Otherwise, you can pay as you go with a credit card.
2. Charitable organizations must also complete the Certification For \$8.00 Reduced Fee Criminal Record Search Form CJ-032, (Enclosure 7).
3. Access the SLED database by typing in their web address, <http://www.sled.state.sc.us> .
4. The current fees are \$25.00 per regular screening and \$8.00 per screening for charitable organizations. In lieu of setting up a billing account with SLED, the Website also allows you to make payment for fees with either VISA or Master card.
5. At present, the Internet does not recognize an \$18.00 fee to screen volunteers. You will have to pay the regular \$25.00 fee to obtain results via the Internet. Otherwise, you can pay the \$18.00 fee over the counter at the SLED office or through the mail.

b. Obtaining state results over the counter:

Visit the SLED office at 4400 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC, CJIS Division-Records Section (Beige Stucco Building; park in visitor parking lot). Office hours are 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

1. Forms:

- (a) SLED Form CJ-055 (Enclosure 7) must be completed by licensed health care facilities to obtain results.

- (b) All other organizations that have employees or volunteers working in health care facilities but are not licensed by our Department must complete SLED Form 110288 (Enclosure 7).
 - (c) If either entity of (a) and (b) above is a charitable organization, then SLED Form CJ-032 (Enclosure 7) must also be completed in order to receive the reduced \$8.00 fee.
- 2. Present business check, money order, or cashier's check for appropriate fee (\$8.00 for charitable organizations, \$18.00 for volunteers, \$25.00 for regular employees). **PERSONAL CHECKS OR CASH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

NOTE: Twenty-four hours is needed to process two or more walk-in requests. You will need a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish SLED to mail the results to you.

- c. Obtaining state results by mail:
 - 1. Complete the appropriate form(s) below and mail to State Law Enforcement Division, Post Office Box 21398, Columbia, SC, 29221, ATTN: Records.
 - 2. Forms:
 - (a) SLED Form CJ-055 (Enclosure 7) must be completed by licensed health care facilities to obtain results.
 - (b) All other organizations that have employees or volunteers working in health care facilities but are not licensed by our Department must complete SLED Form 110288 (Enclosure 7).
 - (c) If either entity of (a) and (b) above is a charitable organization, then SLED Form CJ-032 (Enclosure 7) must also be completed in order to receive the reduced \$8.00 fee.
 - 3. Include the following:
 - (a) Business check, money order or cashier's check in the correct amount made payable to SLED (\$8.00 for employees of charitable organizations, \$25.00 for regular employees, \$18.00 for volunteers);
 - (b) Completed SLED Form CJ-032 (Enclosure 7), Certification For \$8.00 Reduced Criminal Record Search for Charitable Organizations, if applicable;

(c) Self-addressed, stamped envelope.

8. REQUESTING A FEDERAL CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK (Encl. 2, Fig. 3)

The procedures contained in this section are intended for direct care entities licensed by the Division of Health Licensing. Our ability to administer the law is limited to these licensed entities only. However, in the interest of facilitating the process our office will provide fingerprint cards to third party organizations. Such organizations are limited to those that have a written contract with a licensed direct care entity in which the organization is conducting criminal background checks for the direct care entity or is providing temporary employees to the direct care entity. As a part of the written contract with the direct care entity, the third party organization agrees to provide a written letter to the direct care entity stating that the employee has had a criminal background check conducted in accordance with Section 44-7-2910 of the SC Code of Laws and the procedures contained in this memorandum. The contract must further stipulate that the third party organization agrees to provide a copy of the results of the background check to the direct care entity or to the Department upon request within 2 hours of receiving the request. A copy of the contract must be on file with the direct care entity. A copy must also be on file with the Division of Health Licensing for the purposes of determining the appropriate manner in which we can release results.

For educational institutions conducting clinical studies in a licensed direct care entity, see enclosure 4. For organizations conducting criminal background checks on behalf of a licensed direct care entity, see enclosure 5. For organizations providing temporary employees to a licensed direct care entity, see enclosure 6.

Once you have determined that a federal background check is necessary:

- a. Obtain fingerprint cards from the Division of Health Licensing by:
 1. Writing to **DHEC, Division of Health Licensing, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC, 29201**; or
 2. Calling Ms. Georgia Duensing at (803) 545-4210; or
 3. E-mailing Ms. Georgia Duensing at duensiga@dhec.state.sc.us.
- b. There are two types of fingerprints cards that you can request from the Division of Health Licensing. The type of card you need depends upon the type of direct care entity for which you are licensed, and whether or not the applicant is an employee, contract direct caregiver or volunteer direct caregiver. **The supply of cards we have on hand is limited and we ask that you only request the number of cards necessary for each applicant who requires a fingerprint card check.**

- 1.) **Third party organization that provide temporary employees to direct care entities**, see enclosure 6 before proceeding to the next step.
- 2.) **Third party organizations that conduct criminal background checks on behalf of a direct care entity** see enclosure 5 before proceeding to the next step.
- 3.) **A nursing home or home health agency** that has hired or is considering hiring an applicant who is an **employee or contract direct caregiver**, must submit fingerprint cards with the OIR number **“SCNFHHC9Z, PL 105-277, Columbia, SC”** (See enclosure 2, Figure 5). In the block of the fingerprint card “Reason Fingerprinted”, type or print legibly:
 - (a) “Nursing Home, Employee” or;
 - (b) “Home Health Agency, Employee”.
- 4.) **Volunteers** working as direct caregivers for a **nursing home or home health agency**, must submit fingerprint cards with the OIR number **“SCDHEC00Z, SC DHEC, Columbia, SC”** (See enclosure, 2 Figure 4). In the block of the fingerprint card “Reason Fingerprinted”, type or print legibly:
 - a. “Nursing Home, Volunteer” or;
 - b. “Home Health Agency, Volunteer”.
- 5.) **A community residential care facility or day care facility for adults** that has hired or is considering hiring an applicant as an employee, contract direct caregiver, **or volunteer** who will be working as a direct caregiver must submit fingerprint cards with the OIR number **“SCDHEC00Z, SC DHEC, Columbia, SC”** (See enclosure 2, Figure 4). In the block of the fingerprint card “Reason Fingerprinted”, type or print legibly:
 - (a) “Day Care Facility for Adults, Employee”; or
 - (b) “Day Care Facility for Adults, Volunteer”; or
 - (c) “Community Residential Care Facility, Employee”; or
 - (d) “Community Residential Care Facility, Volunteer”.
- 6.) In the fingerprint card block that says **“Your NO. OCA”**, enter your **license number** as assigned by the Division of Health Licensing (See enclosure 2, Figures 4 and 5).

- 7.) In order for the FBI check to be conducted, the **social security number of the applicant must be entered on the card**. This information will be used only for the purposes of conducting a criminal background check. This mandatory requirement is based on Section 44-7-2910 of the SC Code of Laws, as amended. We are informing you of this requirement pursuant to the Privacy Act of 1974 (PL. 93.579), which requires that federal, state, or local agencies inform individuals whose social security number is requested whether such disclosure is mandatory or voluntary, the basis of authority for such solicitation and uses that will be made of it.
- c. Fingerprinting the Applicant: An individual who has been properly trained in the procedure must do the fingerprinting. In addition to the fingerprinting, the applicant must be properly identified by legitimate identification. We recommend that you request your local law enforcement agency to do this for you. DHEC does not provide this service.
- d. Once you have completed the fingerprint cards and the applicant has been fingerprinted, send the cards, along with your payment, in the form of a **certified check, bank check or money order** for the correct fee.

(PERSONAL CHECKS OR CASH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED).

For employees, the fee is \$24.00.

For volunteers, the fee is \$18.00.

Make check or money order payable to SCDHEC to the address below:

**SCDHEC
Bureau of Finance ATTN: Accounts Receivable
PO BOX 100103
Columbia, SC, 29202**

The Bureau of Finance will process the check and forward the FBI cards to the Division of Health Licensing. Health Licensing will forward the fingerprint cards to SLED. SLED will forward the fingerprint cards to the FBI. The FBI will return the results to the Division of Health Licensing.

9. **RESULTS OF FBI BACKGROUND CHECK:**

- a. For **nursing homes** and **home health agencies**, Health Licensing will forward the results of the FBI background check to the direct care entity. For **third party organizations** conducting criminal background checks on behalf of a nursing home or home health agency, the results will be forwarded directly to the direct care entity. Exception: by law (P.L. 92-544) we are not permitted to release the

results on volunteers. We can only inform the direct care entity that the individual has or does not have a criminal conviction or has pled no contest (nolo contendere).

- b. For **community residential care facilities, day care facilities for adults, and third party organizations**, the Division of Health Licensing is not permitted by law (P.L. 92-544) to forward or disclose the results of the federal background check. We can only inform the direct care entity that the individual has or does not have a criminal conviction or has pled no contest (nolo contendere).
- c. For inspection purposes, the direct care entity must retain a copy of the federal background check results on file at the facility location. For volunteers for whom the Department provides a letter in lieu of the results, the direct care entity or third party organization shall retain a copy of the letter.
- d. Results of an FBI background check can take up to 90 days or more to get back to our office. We ask that you not call us for the results. Please be assured that you will be informed as soon as possible.

10. PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF ARTICLE 23:

The Department of Health and Environmental Control's Division of Health Licensing is the entity responsible for enforcement of Article 23. In accordance with Section 44-7-2950 of the 1976 SC Code of Laws, as amended, an individual who violates this article, or a regulation promulgated pursuant to this article, is subject to a civil fine of **one hundred dollars** for the first violation and **five hundred dollars** for each subsequent violation. A fine imposed pursuant to this section must be paid before a direct care entity's license can be renewed. Fines collected pursuant to this section must be retained by the Department to help offset the costs associated with carrying out the Department's responsibility under this article.

11. ASSISTANCE:

- a. The Division of Health Licensing has staff available to answer questions and to assist you with the new procedures outlined in this memorandum. You can contact our office by:
 - 1. Writing to **SCDHEC, Division of Health Licensing, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC, 29201**; or
 - 2. Calling Ms. Georgia Duensing, at (803) 545-4210; or
 - 3. E-mailing Ms. Georgia Duensing at duensiga@dhec.state.sc.us.

- b. For determining eligibility for employment or contract services for crimes not covered by regulation, it may be necessary for you to consult with your legal counsel prior to determining eligibility.
- c. Copies of the forms referenced in this procedures memorandum are enclosed and you may make as many copies as needed without obtaining special permission.
- d. If you have questions regarding state criminal background checks, please contact SLED, CJIS Division-Records Section at (803) 737-9000 or by fax at (803) 896-7005.